

Tom's Success Story

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By Tom

Who am I and why am I writing?

I am writing this to share the story of my wonderful experience with the ADC-High Gain Project in Santa Monica, California. I will attempt to describe my experience, explain how I benefitted, and hopefully show how others can benefit who are in similar situations. I am also writing this as an expression of my gratitude to a place that I deem instrumental in my transformation as a human being.

I am a two time DUI offender who participated in the 18 month program as “prescribed” by the Los Angeles County Superior Court. I was referred to the Santa Monica ADC-High Gain project by several people, including my attorney. I acted upon their recommendation and enrolled in their program, which I successfully completed on September 29, 2011. Career wise, I am a business owner and professional executive. I am also an admitted alcoholic. My drinking and my career obsession was interfering with my life and the people around me. I had lost control of my ability to remember who I really was. I decided to embrace my second DUI as an opportunity to start a journey of transformation, which I believe helped lead me to the wonderfully talented family of people at ADC-High Gain Project.

What was my experience at ADC-High Gain like?

After my initial interview with the friendly and caring Program Director, Jennifer, I started the first phase of my program by attending weekly classroom participation sessions led by Dennis. I chose Saturday mornings for this. I must say that if the program had ended after this first phase, it would have been worth the recommendation. Compared with the program I chose for my first DUI, the classroom sessions were so educational, so thought provoking, and so insightful that I actually looked forward to the Saturday morning stimulation. The vast majority of attendees, who were not admitted alcoholics, agreed with me on this. He managed to ingrain into our collective consciousness the phrase “Do not drive

to the drink”, and caused all of us to shift, or open our minds to shifting, our perspective on drinking and driving. Many lively and responsible discussions were enjoined where we all shared different ideas on how to avoid driving to the drink; as opposed to giving yourself a chance to make a judgement call, while impaired, with your car keys in your pocket. We were encouraged to investigate and explore the circumstances in our lives that led us to our DUI’s and High Gain. He taught us about the various stages that can lead one from social drinking to alcoholism, and the science behind it. I especially benefitted from his discussions on the difference between surrender and compliance, inasmuch as I was starting to learn to embrace a program of recovery for myself. The great thing about these Saturday morning classes was that it was highly interactive and not just someone running a movie projector. We all shared our DUI’s in common and even developed a certain camaraderie that we all seemed to benefit from. Overall, this portion of the High Gain program was essentially an education in my misuse of alcohol. Dennis was extremely adept at bringing down to a level of understanding, the physiological and psychological effects of my alcohol dependency.

The second phase of my program, Group Dynamics, was largely group participation sessions, which were facilitated by Steve. I particularly enjoyed learning how to start to express myself openly and honestly in the presence of others. This was a very new experience for me, the professional isolator. I found it to be a period of great incremental growth. Steve, a wonderful facilitator, was adept at giving each of us in the group the space to learn to express and share our thoughts and emotions in a safe and nurturing environment. This was important because we all came from very diverse backgrounds and differing stages in our misuse of alcohol. It was also a good forum in which to discuss our individual experiences with the various self-help groups we were attending. The people in my group seemed to grow closer each week and we became eager to share and not only express ourselves, but to earnestly seek to help and support each other. We started to learn how to be of service to others in the group. This type of setting was surely enhanced by Steve’s experience as well as his warm heart.

These Saturday morning sessions (my choice of day) always left me with a certain sense of fulfillment, a realization that I am not alone, and with an eagerness to reconnect at the next session. This phase of the program was helping me start to remember who I really am and gave me a forum to start to demonstrate that. I still maintain contact with several people from that group.

Concurrent with the first two phases, and ultimately the entire third phase of my program at High Gain, I participated in scheduled personal interviews with the magnificent Executive Director, Jayne. I eagerly anticipated my bi-weekly sessions with Jayne. She was a beacon of wisdom and compassion for me through those difficult first months of my sobriety. It was important for me to have someone, other than myself, for whom to be accountable. Jayne was always there to offer encouragement and keen insight into my personal situation, of a kind that I have rarely, if ever, received from someone outside of my family. With her constant enthusiasm and support, I was able to continue to grow in all aspects of my new life; body, mind and spirit. Always intellectually challenging, I found her to be a guiding light in my journey from my head to an open heart. She helped to show me different ways in which I could be of service to others. She assisted me in many ways with my desire to redirect my career and to continue on in my desire to help others who wish to transform their lives from the effects of alcoholism. I found myself delighted to see her every other week and to express what new experiences had happened. She even provided support and comfort in my early sobriety during the death of a very close family member. In short, she helped me remember who I really am, and the ADC-High Gain program helped me express myself as who I really am. I am forever grateful.

My overall impression of all the support staff, especially Mark, is that I was treated with respect and dignity; with care and more of a sense of family than as just another faceless DUI offender there to serve out their punishment. All of the staff was certainly engaged in my well-being. Yes, these people really do care about helping you and it is reflected in everyone in the organization.

How did I benefit?

As you can tell, I have benefitted enormously from this wonderful program. I was re-educated concerning my misuse of alcohol and my disease. Problem areas in my life were identified and I was offered encouragement and positive incentive to grow in my program of recovery. I was motivated to take responsibility for my behavior and I was assisted in the transformation of my perception of who I really am. I took advantage of the opportunity to meet with others who had undergone similar experiences and I grew in my ability to express myself openly, willingly, open-mindedly, honestly, and courageously.

It turns out that this program is something more... something more fulfilling than I expected. Believe it or not, it became something that I eagerly anticipated each week rather than just a necessary evil to be begrudgingly carried out to satisfy the court.

If you let it, it can, even in a small way, transform you. It helped to transform me in a big way and for that I am forever grateful to my “family” at ADC-High Gain Project.